

# Ritter & Johnson: Iran Retaliates, Hormuz CLOSED – Israel ENDS Ceasefire

Scott Ritter and Larry Johnson react to Iran's massive response to Israeli and US ceasefire violations, and what it means for the ongoing war. Scott Ritter is a former UN weapons inspector and Marine Corps Intelligence officer. Larry Johnson is a former CIA analyst. You can support their work below: Scott Ritter: <https://scottritter.substack.com/> Larry Johnson: <https://sonar21.com/> LIKE the video and Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: [chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com](https://chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com) Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritho> #iran #trump #ceasefire

## #Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. I'm joined by two friends of the show: Larry Johnson, former CIA analyst, now geopolitical commentator and analyst, and Scott Ritter, former U.N. weapons inspector and U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer, author, and geopolitical analyst. Gentlemen, thanks so much for joining me today.

## #Larry Johnson

Yeah, good to be here. Sorry I didn't get the memo about the uniform.

## #Danny

Otherwise, I would have come appropriately dressed. We've got our blues on, and you've got your signature Hawaiian shirt, so everything's good. But what isn't going well, John—let's get right to it. Hit the like button, everyone, as you come on. What isn't going well is this ceasefire debacle. Iran's deputy foreign minister said they delayed a missile and drone strike retaliation against Israel, as Israel has been bombing Lebanon—killing over 200 people in the last 24 hours, with thousands more injured. Iran said that Pakistan assured it that Pakistani mediators would talk to Trump and get Trump to essentially rein in Israel.

Now, there are reports—wait, is this the report here? Yep, that Trump called Netanyahu, urging him to scale back Israel's strikes in Lebanon to protect the negotiations, according to NBC. While the Trump administration and Israel both said Lebanon is not covered by the ceasefire, Israel agreed to

be a helpful partner. Yet other reports are saying, Scott and Larry, that Israel is going to conduct negotiations with Lebanon's government under fire. Now, Scott, I want to start with you. You know, Iran has kept very strict control over the Strait of Hormuz. Some reports have said they've kept it closed, or have closed it further, because of these strikes—because Lebanon is a key part of the ceasefire. That said, there are reports that there's only one vessel that's passed through in the last 24 hours.

## **#Danny**

Went through, and uh, this ceasefire is very much on the brink. So how about we start with you, Scott—what's going on here, and how should we see the current situation regarding the ceasefire and the war?

## **#Scott Ritter**

First of all, there is no ceasefire, so let's stop talking about a ceasefire. It doesn't exist. There are precursors to a possible ceasefire, but this was always going to be a mess. We knew that on day one—when Israel bombed Beirut and when the United Arab Emirates bombed Israel, bombed Iranian oil infrastructure. This is a conflict with many moving parts. We also have 31 autonomous military districts in Iran, some of which may not be communicating effectively with the Iranian government. And because they are autonomous, if they haven't been given the word to cease and desist, they may continue operating. So this was always going to be a mess. It's also a political mess.

You know, there are a lot of politically sensitive tightropes that have to be walked here—by the United States, by President Trump, and by Iran. What you have is an agreement in principle: Iran's ten salient points are on the table, and the United States' fifteen salient points are on the table. The parties are supposed to meet and begin a two-week process of reconciling these points. So the notion that everything's agreed to up front is absurd. Nothing's been agreed to up front except that there's a need to talk about it. It's tragic what's happening in Beirut—absolutely tragic—but it's Israel. What do you expect? There's a game being played here, and there's a script being followed.

You know, the fact is, the United States did agree that Lebanon would be part of the ceasefire. That was stated up front, because when they accepted the Iranian points as a precursor to further discussion, the Iranian points said that Lebanon would be included. The American points didn't say that, but that doesn't automatically preclude the Iranian point. And the Pakistani president made it clear that the United States understood Lebanon would be included. The problem is, the United States was negotiating without coordinating with Israel. So now they have to go back and coordinate with Israel. Bibi was very unhappy. He said he could tolerate a discussion with Iran, but Lebanon's a special issue, Hezbollah's a special problem, and that they need to, you know, continue doing what they're doing.

What they can't do is allow Lebanon to automatically be rolled into Iran. So what Israel is doing is playing a game where they can now, you know, be seen as linking any ceasefire to a negotiation with the Lebanese government, separate from the U.S.–Iranian talks. This is all just part of a game that's being played. What I say—and I'll leave it with this—is that both Iran and the United States have reached the maximum level of their escalation ladders, their respective escalation ladders. To go further, for either one of them, is to invite permanent harm—permanent harm to Donald Trump politically—meaning that things will be done that can't be reversed in time to have a positive impact on the November election.

Donald Trump only cares about Donald Trump. He's the ultimate narcissist. We have to stop talking about American national security or foreign policy objectives—this is all about Donald Trump's legacy. And Trump is panicked right now because it's not looking too good for him. So, you know, we have to let Donald Trump be Donald Trump. Iran is concerned about going so far that it doesn't matter if sanctions are lifted. If enough harm is done to Iran, the promise of the Iranian government to take care of the Iranian people will not be fulfilled. Right now, Iran is on the cusp of being able to fulfill a 47-year promise to the Iranian people that there will be economic good times.

And that's the Iranian objective right here. There are other things wrapped in. You know, the nuclear issue is about pride, not necessity, so Iran will negotiate on that. The Strait of Hormuz is about survival, so Iran won't negotiate that away, but they will negotiate some sort of joint stewardship. There's a lot of maneuvering room here. But what's clear, at least from my perspective, is that neither party can afford to continue this conflict. There must be a resolution. So there's going to be a lot of games being played. And unfortunately, these games involve people dying—nearly 300 Lebanese. But I... there isn't a ceasefire yet, though I'm very optimistic that there will be one.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, Larry, what are your thoughts here?

## **#Larry Johnson**

I see this like a negotiation between two people about where and what to eat. One party—let's call it the United States—wants to eat a worm-encrusted piece of cow manure. The other party, Iran, wants to eat steak. So how do you think that negotiation is going to go? Where's the middle ground? There is no middle ground. That's point number one. The ten points that Iran laid out were not negotiable points. They're their expectations and demands—what must be met in order for there to be negotiations. So they're not going to negotiate over how much of the Strait of Hormuz they close. In fact, I think Ayatollah Mujtaba Khamenei just said, "Hey, it's under new management. Get rid of it—it'll be the Strait of Iran, not Hormuz." So that's number one. Number two, the sanctions have got to be lifted. Right.

They're not going to say, "Yeah, we'll sign up to an agreement and promise to lift the sanctions," just like they did under the JCPOA. Iran's already been down that path. They signed that agreement back in 2015, even without the assurances of Russia and China. And then, all of a sudden, Europe's like, "Well, we're not sure yet. You've got to jump through this hoop, you've got to do that extra thing." Then Trump tears up the agreement. And despite having signed it, despite complying with inspections and doing what was asked under the deal, they didn't get a goddamn thing. So I think they understand now—no, they're not going to promise, you know, double pinky swear that they'll do it. No, that's got to happen before they make any movement on anything else.

Number one, it'll be interesting to see if Iran allows Witkoff and Jared Kushner in the room tomorrow—assuming the talks even go forward. Now, we've got to look at how this evolved. When the initial agreement was announced, I'm not sure if Trump had read it properly, but as Scott said, the United States had agreed—okay, Lebanon's on the table, Lebanon and Yemen and Iraq, those three. It wasn't just Lebanon. The initial reaction in Israel and among the Zionist crowd, including the Christian Zionists like Mr. Huckabee—the Christian nut out of Arkansas—and then the Ben Shapiros and the Mark Levins, you knew it was bad when Levin, who normally can't talk without screaming, was like, you need to get him a sedative, hit him with a couple of darts to bring him down to a level of normality.

He was almost depressed, talking in a low voice. That told me right away—uh-oh, here comes the storm. This was agreed to Tuesday night, and between Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, I think Trump got a number of verbal beatings and lashings. Then all of a sudden, he was like Butterfly McQueen from *\*Gone with the Wind\**: "I don't know nothing about birthin' no babies, Miss Garland. I don't know nothing about Lebanon. No, no, no, we didn't agree to that." And boy, they've got to get rid of—got to open that strait now. So he was reversing everything they had agreed to. It was the intervention, and that's why Israel said, "Great, this is our chance."

We're going to try to take Beirut back to the Stone Age—which they did on Wednesday. And, you know, Iran was reacting, like, "Okay, they're not honoring this agreement." But it was the intervention of Pakistan and, I believe, also China. And while that one document or tweet she showed seemed to be a polite conversation—no, it wasn't. I think somebody on the Trump team called and threatened Israel, like, "You cut this out now." So since the end of Wednesday, we haven't had any more of those bombings. There's still fighting on the ground between Hezbollah and Israel.

And I think where that's headed is that Israel's ultimately going to have to withdraw its forces in a couple of weeks, probably. So the talks that will take place starting on Saturday—the parties will arrive on Friday, but the actual talks will be on Saturday—we'll see how serious they are. Will they be in person? And by that, I mean, will they be sitting in the same room talking to each other? Or are they going to continue this other nonsense where the Pakistanis walk in and talk to the Iranians, then walk down the hall to another room and talk to the Americans? You know, that's what they call "retarded diplomacy," and that will achieve nothing.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, you go a long way to do something as indirect as that. Scott, I want to get you in here, maybe to comment on the various positions both sides have taken amid these bad-faith actions by Israel and the United States since the talks were announced yesterday. Here's what Donald Trump said today: that the shooting is going to start "bigger, better, and stronger than anyone has ever seen before" if a real agreement is not reached and complied with. There was a lot more to it, but let's not read the whole thing here. And then Iran is saying, of course, that these talks are in danger of falling apart if the Lebanon question isn't resolved.

So what do you make of Trump's stance here? The Trump administration's stance always seems to be a lot of bluster—talking about coming back in and destroying everything if Iran doesn't do what the U.S. says. Iran doesn't seem like it's budging. And Larry mentioned China. Some of what I heard about why China got involved is because, well, what happens if the United States did what it threatened to do just a couple of days ago, and then Iran did what it said it was going to do in retaliation—take out all of the Gulf's energy? A lot of the world's energy would be destroyed, and that would hurt China. That would hurt the entire world economy. But what are your reactions to these developments?

## **#Scott Ritter**

Well, first of all, you know, I hearken back to \*Game of Thrones\*, season one.

## **#Danny**

I love that show, by the way.

## **#Larry Johnson**

I know what reference you're about to make. Which part of season one are you talking about?

## **#Scott Ritter**

When Joffrey is the new king and he's being dressed down by Tyrion in the council, Joffrey says, "You can't speak to me that way. I am the king." And then his grandfather says, "Any man who has to say he's the king is not the king." That's how I view Donald Trump's posts. If you've got to sit there and say, "The shooting's going to start, we're going to kick your butt," forty days after the shooting started and you still haven't kicked their butt—it's empty bluster. Look, the United States has already expended the totality of its so-called good targets. There are no good targets left. All that's left now is a war crime—a blatant war crime. We know that what's going on right now is a war crime, an illegal war of aggression.

We know that war crimes have been committed—the massacre of the Americans, 165 or 170 schoolgirls in Minab, and other atrocities of equal horror. So I'm not trying to pretend that the United States hasn't been committing war crimes. They have. But one could argue military intent in some of these, or call them accidents. But now, the expanded target deck that Trump was talking about is 100% collective punishment—100% cultural genocide. His own words convict him. And his own words are basically what got him in trouble, because I believe the establishment pushed back. I believe the generals put him on notice that they wouldn't execute those orders—that these were unlawful orders. They weren't going to do that. And Donald Trump may have never intended to actually carry them out.

This was all bluster before he accepted something that had already been put on the table. That's why I believe this. Those ten points had been articulated by Iran well before Donald Trump threatened to erase Iranian civilization. So it's not as though the Iranians went, "Oh God, no, he's threatening to erase us—here's ten points." The Iranians already had those ten points out there. Zarif had already published his paper in *\*Foreign Affairs\**. So this is Donald Trump impressing himself, talking to himself. But there won't be any more shooting, because there's nothing left to shoot. The war is over. We lost. He just can't admit it. There's nothing more we can do.

We're out of significant quantities of standoff precision-guided munitions, so we can't do long-range strikes anymore—not in any meaningful way. Part of the strike package that was moving in included B-52s armed with Mark 84 gravity bombs with satellite-guided JDAM components. They pulled back when it suddenly became clear that the Iranians still had long-range standoff radar-guided missiles in service. That's what shot down the F-15E. And we can't come in and suppress those effectively anymore, because they also have this whole new system we hadn't planned on—electro-optical guided, infrared guided, or a combination of both. We didn't defeat the Iranian air defense. The Iranians played us. We didn't destroy their navy.

Who the hell do you think laid those mines in the water? The Iranian Navy. Hey, Pete, how's that looking for you, pal? And I can guarantee you this: Iranian aircraft will be flying in Iranian skies because they haven't been destroyed either. They've been stored. The Iranians rode out our attack, rode out the best we had, and now they've come in with phase two—and we don't know how to deal with it. We had two options to save face. The first option was to go into Natanz—no, not Natanz, Isfahan—and do the seizure. I'm writing something up right now. I don't want to, you know, drag on forever, but there's more to this mission than meets the eye, this rescue mission. It's much more than that. It was the effort to go after the uranium, and it failed. Absolutely failed. A Desert One-type calamity.

And two, we can't carry out an amphibious operation. The USS Tripoli couldn't get near the shore—it's impossible. And the military said, "We're done." Trump has no options. He can't secure the Strait of Hormuz, and that's the critical thing. Iran has its fingers on the throat of the global economy right now. They can squeeze any time they want, and there's nothing Donald Trump can do to change that. No amount of bluster will change it. And that's what's really hurting him—he can't declare

victory. So he had no choice but to bluster, bluster, bluster, and make it appear that he brought the Iranians to the table. You saw Pete Hegseth: "We have dominance. We dominate everywhere." Again, if you have to say you have dominance, you don't have dominance.

It becomes quite obvious. So I, you know, I take everything this president says—there's nothing more the United States can do. We don't have the military capacity. And, you know, we bring in China. Understand this: we just proved to the Chinese that we can't defeat them in Taiwan. I just want everybody to understand that. We just proved there's no longer a question—we can't do anything to China. The National Security Strategy document published in November of last year said the United States will dominate the Chinese by seeking conventional military overmatch in the Pacific. Overmatch—that means we're superior. We're superior to nothing. We can't beat the Iranians. Imagine what we'd do against the Chinese in Taiwan. Nothing. We can't secure the South China Sea.

So the Chinese just proved they have their fingers on the throat of the international shipping lanes that go through there. They control everything. This is a game changer. The United States needs to pull back and regroup—and that's what we're doing. Look at what we're doing in Europe. I mean, I think we're withdrawing 100,000 troops. That's what Marco Rubio says we're probably going to do. I think NATO is dead because we're disengaging from Europe—we can't compete there anymore. It's too expensive. It takes six months to deploy a heavy armored brigade. It used to take us ten days to deploy 300,000 troops rolling in on pre-positioned equipment. That doesn't exist anymore. The United States is literally a paper tiger.

We look good, but all of our capabilities are legacy capabilities that don't match modern realities. I'll just leave you with this: Commandant of the Marine Corps Berger said in 2019 that we can't carry out our mission because we're trapped by legacy amphibious operations. We can no longer put all our Marines on a handful of amphibious ships and go in to project power ashore, because they'll sink us before we get there. That was just proven. The USS \*Tripoli\* is retreating from the region, not advancing on it. And there we are. This is why the United States will accept a ceasefire. It'll be interesting to see how we play it, because there's a lot of politics involved, but we have no other options. There will be no shooting, because there's nothing to shoot with and nothing to shoot at.

## **#Danny**

Larry, please come in. Same here.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, you know, as long as we're fighting Grenada, man, we are badass. Back in 1983, when we invaded Grenada, there was a SEAL team led by—well, I think he was Commander, maybe Lieutenant Commander—Rick Woolard. Rick was a Vietnam veteran, and he and his SEALs went to secure the governor of Grenada. They got him, and they were carrying basically short-barreled rifles

and handguns. Well, they got pinned down by some .50-caliber heavy machine guns that were manned by Cubans. So what did they do? They had to wait until the Marines landed and deployed their tanks, and the tanks came roaring up the road. Now, why am I telling a story that's like 43 years old? Well, the Marines don't have tanks anymore.

So if the same situation were unfolding today, Rick and his buddies would be screwed, because the Marines couldn't come rescue them—they don't have tanks anymore. And that's exactly what Scott was talking about: we have a 20th-century military model. It's based on the idea that we've got these aircraft carriers that can sail out with all this air power on board. And, sure, they can project force—except if they get within 500 miles of shore, they're now vulnerable to hypersonic missiles. In the case of China, they've got to stay something like 1,000 miles off. That creates a problem for projecting air power, because the combat radius of the F-35s is only about 500 or 600 miles. So, you know, just do the math—if you're 700 miles offshore and you launch your F-35s, they're going to have to get refueled somewhere.

## **#Larry Johnson**

And those air refuelers—they're pretty easy targets to shoot down. They're not stealth. So we've got that problem: the traditional way of projecting naval power no longer works. That was highlighted in the Red Sea about eight months ago, when we tried to establish freedom of navigation. At least there was a very specific military objective, and the U.S. Navy failed. They got driven out of the Red Sea by the Houthis—except Donald Trump, in classic Trump fashion, proclaimed that they'd capitulated.

And so, "Let's go, guys. We've won. They've lost. Let's go—we retreat." And, you know, I can just see the Houthis. It would be like a Monty Python skit: the Houthi leadership sitting around a table going, "Capitulate? Did you capitulate? Me? I can't even spell capitulate." You know, that kind of thing. So we've gotten to the age of pretend victory. Similarly, with ground forces—oh boy, we've got this army, man, we're going to invade. Well, okay, we've got about 452,000 in the Army now, and I think it's around 140,000 in the Marines.

## **#Larry Johnson**

And, you know, that pales in comparison. We had about that total number on the ground in Vietnam at the height in '68, '69. So we couldn't—we can't field that kind of army. In 2003, when we were going to invade Iraq, we had eleven months to assemble troops in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—165,000, I believe, was the number. Right. We can't do that today. I mean, if you tried that now, they'd be getting hit with missiles and drones. You know, as Scott recalls, back in those days going out for Scud hunts—well, the Scuds, you know, one, we never found them, but they weren't very effective. Not today. The combination of missiles and drones makes that completely ineffective. So that leaves us with air power—and air power has its limits.

And, you know, Iran watched carefully, twenty-three years ago, what we did to Iraq. And they said, "Okay, we can't keep this stuff above ground forever. No, we can't do that. We've got to go underground." And so they've moved an enormous amount of their actual military assets underground. And we—no matter how many bombs or bunker busters we drop—we're not touching it. So this then brings up the point: how do you define victory? Well, okay, you've got to have some objectives. Iran didn't choose this, so it's had one objective—survive—and force the other side to come and seek negotiation. That's exactly what has happened. It was not Iran running to Pakistan pleading, "Oh, please call the Americans up, tell them we're sorry, we'll bend over and they can do whatever they want to us."

No, no, it was the opposite way—the United States was the one pleading. And Israel's too stupid and too damn proud to do the pleading, but they need it, because their own chief of staff warned the government two weeks ago, "We're collapsing. We can't continue this." So the United States is going to paint this as if it's a great victory: "We forced the Iranians to surrender." And the Iranians might allow some of that to go on without challenging it, just to be a little benevolent. But they're going to insist this war against Lebanon stops now. And if it doesn't stop—well, back to battle stations. And that leaves the world in a difficult strait. And that strait is called the Strait of Hormuz, because the Iranians basically have the world by the balls. It's worse than a chokehold.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, yeah, Scott—I mean, and Larry—you know, when I saw Iran publicly say that the reason there needs to be naval coordination for any vessels coming through the Strait of Hormuz is because there are mines laid out there, I thought, if Iran's Navy and military aren't coordinating and escorting, you might just go boom. So that was really interesting, especially in this moment. But yeah.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Actually, let me interject. Have Scott put together a battle plan to retake the Strait of Hormuz, because I want him to explain just how damn difficult—if not impossible—this thing is.

## **#Danny**

Yes, Scott, please—that's a great question.

## **#Scott Ritter**

So if I'm going to take the Strait of Hormuz, first of all, you're going to have to come through Jordan, because you can't land 300,000 or 400,000 American troops in Saudi Arabia that close to Mecca and Medina. So you're going to have to come through Jordan, which means now you're going to need to go through Iraq—and that's going to be contested. So right off the bat, we're going to have a precursor fight securing lines of communication through Iraq. You're going to have to set up

several logistics hubs on the way in. So it's going to be—well, you know, it's going to be an advance contested through resistance forces and attacked by drones and missiles as you're going in.

But you're going to have to come through Jordan and set up bases until you get to a position where you can project fire control over Kharg and about 20 kilometers inside Iran. Then you're going to have to initiate an air campaign that lasts as long as it takes to suppress meaningful resistance there. After that, you'll have to land troops and sweep the coastline. When we planned to do this—because we had been planning it for a while—we were going to come in through Chabahar, a forcible entry in Chabahar. We were talking about 60,000 to 80,000 Marines, followed up by 120,000 to 200,000 Army soldiers. That was the op plan.

That op plan got modified into Operation Desert Shield–Desert Storm. But this is the number of troops we're talking about. So right off the bat, now we have to defend a long line of communication—you've got to almost double the troops. We'd need air defense that we don't even possess. We can't do it. That's the problem. We can't do it. We don't have the capacity. If you really want to plan this, then I'd say we have to mobilize the United States of America. We'd have to put about two million men and women—primarily men—in uniform, and basically do a World War II–style invasion and occupation. On the march going in, we'd have to occupy Iraq, and then we'd have to move into Kuwait and occupy Kuwait.

And then we'd have to sweep into Iran and work our way down. And, you know, we're talking millions of troops to do this. And we still might not win, because the lines of communication are too tenuous. The Iranian missiles would wreak havoc on our logistics. So there's just not a snowball's chance in hell that the U.S. military today is capable of securing the Strait of Hormuz. Zero. No capability. No capacity. But we knew that going in. That's the frustrating part of this. And when Donald Trump says, "Well, we never anticipated," all we did was anticipate. We saw this. When I was a weapons inspector in Iraq, I worked often with the Fifth Fleet.

You know, sitting there just having casual conversations—at that time, we felt confident that we could secure the Strait of Hormuz using conventional naval power. But as Iran developed its ballistic missiles, Iran got better and better and better. The reality became that we can't penetrate their area-denial weaponry. And so Iran owns the Strait of Hormuz, and they will forever own the Strait of Hormuz. There's nothing we can do to change that equation. It's not even worth trying to come up with a plan, because it won't work—it would just lead to massive casualties on the part of the United States.

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Well, you know, another question I had—and Larry, you can start—I know, Scott, you're writing about this, is the timing. It's not lost on me that, as developments led to these upcoming talks and talk of a potential ceasefire, we had that whole incident with the F-15 being downed, and of course what happened afterward—the rescue operation, plus whatever else was going on, the

seizing-uranium operation, what have you. I just want to know, Larry, what you—and then you, Scott—think about what exactly happened there and how it influenced the U.S. position now.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, let me start—about 20 years ago, I worked on what they called an attack on a hardened, deeply buried target, an HDBT, inside Iran, going after a nuclear site. And, you know, the lesson we came out with back then was: don't do it. It's too costly—not in terms of dollars, but in terms of human life and material. I do believe that the deployment order was given sometime around March 1st, maybe March 10th or 11th, because we saw an uptick then in deployments out of all the bases in the United States that service U.S. Special Operations Forces. You saw activity coming out of Hunter Army Airfield in Georgia, which has the 75th Rangers, and an element of Task Force 160 coming out of Pope Army Airfield.

That had both, you know, the 82nd, but also Delta Force and some other units—the Special Tactics Squadron, STS-24th. They're sort of the preeminent special operations parachute units—pararescue jumpers and combat controllers. They're the ones who go out and recover people. You had Fort Campbell, Kentucky—again, the 160th there—being loaded up and moved. You had another Ranger battalion out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord. You had SEALs coming out of Oceana Naval Air Station. So, you know, the only times I ever saw those kinds of forces being assembled, it was either for some big-ass exercise or they were doing it for real-world operations.

And in this case, it was clear it was real-world. So they were teed up. I don't know if they were going to go after Bashir, Isfahan, or Natanz, because Natanz is, I think, about 30 or 40 miles north of Isfahan—maybe a little farther. What that F-15 was doing in the area was, you know, let's call it preparation of the battlefield, or trying to destroy some assets. What was unusual is that the chief weapons officer, who was sitting in the back seat—which is normally handled by a lieutenant or a captain—was a full-bird colonel, the vice wing commander of the U.S. forces at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base there in Jordan.

Now, you know, I've talked to some friends who've worked at the CAOC—the Combined Air Operations Center in Al Udeid. And it wasn't common, but it wasn't unheard of for a senior guy like that to say, "Oh, I want to get my time in the plane, I want to get my feet wet in this endeavor." He clearly got shot down. What we do know now is that as soon as they got shot down, the Pentagon, CENTCOM, and the CIA went on a massive disinformation campaign. Reports started leaking that the plane actually went down about 120 miles southwest, down toward the coast—let's say 80 miles from Kharg Island—instead of just south of Isfahan.

I saw a map reproduced that, if it was accurate, showed the colonel actually, after he ejected from the aircraft, was located at a junction—near a road junction, a north-south highway, Highway 65—and the colonel landed, say, three or four miles away. He probably broke his ankle. There were also reports of a broken leg. But he was able to crawl, hobble about a mile up the slope of a mountain,

and hide himself. Now, the CIA later started putting out this nonsense: "Oh, we found him because of his heartbeat. We detected his heartbeat from outer space." Oh, horseshit. Okay. But they were putting that story out just so they could hide whatever other capability they may have used to actually locate him. Because the only way you're going to identify someone by their heartbeat—what, you're going to record your heartbeat, you're going to digitize it?

We're going to put it into the file, and then when you crash, we can come look for you. You know, "Find Private Schmuckatella's heartbeat, please. Beep, beep, beep, beep." You know? Now, here's the question—and it's odd, so I'm just laying it out once. I'm trying to lay out a scenario that makes sense to me for what we see. What we see on the ground is that, instead of landing at an airstrip in a valley about eight kilometers north, these C-130Js land on desert terrain that's actually near one of the holy shrines of Ali. Each is carrying two Little Birds—two AH-6 Little Birds.

We know, just by basic math, that if you've got two C-130s loaded with two AH-6 helicopters apiece, then the maximum number of troops you can carry on each of those—apart from the three-man crew—is about 15 people. That's the maximum. So that gives us a total of 30 people. And I'm thinking, how do you break out that 15? Do you want to have the two pilots you'd need for each Little Bird? No. If you're running a rescue mission, you just want two pilots for one Little Bird on each plane. So you've got a total of four pilots among the 30. That gets us down to 26. Then how many PJs do you want? Okay, again, I'll put two PJs on one C-130 and two PJs on the other.

You've got backup in case something happens to the first one. So then, you know, we're now down from that 15—we're down to 11. Those 11 are made up of either Rangers from the 75th Battalion or SEALs. And that's just if this is a rescue scenario. Okay, normally when they go out to land those kinds of planes in a desert environment, you do a site survey in advance. They didn't do a site survey. So maybe that explains why the planes came in and, on landing, they just dug in, and there's some damage to the wings or the propellers, like they hit the ground. So, you know, maybe that's the explanation. But also, in some of the photographs that were provided, you could see that the boom that's used to refuel was shot up.

So had these things been shot up and shot down out of the sky? That's a possibility. The one that's really bizarre is they recovered an ID card from the wreckage along with her. It's a woman, a major apparently—Amanda Ryder is her name. And she's got her platinum American Express card. Don't leave home without it. So, you know, I don't think the actual mission to try to get the—well, I think the downing of this plane caused the mission to be canceled. I think the reason they had those Little Birds already packed up in the planes was because that was part of the intended operation, and they repurposed it. But, you know, I'm just offering an opinion. I'd be curious what Scott thinks.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, Scott, what's your assessment? I know you're writing about it.

## **#Scott Ritter**

Look, this is all crazy stuff, so there's a lot of informed speculation. Let's start with this, though. The intent to launch a raid against Isfahan was public information—straight-up public information that included not just unnamed sources, but named sources, including General Votel, former commander of Special Operations Command. But also, you know, people who could be identified. The reason I'm bringing this up is that Kash Patel just announced the arrest of some people who were speaking to the media in an unauthorized fashion. And he said, you know, we can't allow this. We hunt this down. We shut it down. Boom, boom, boom.

But you have people talking to the media about this major raid that's being planned. And we're talking about—they're going to land, the 82nd Airborne is going to parachute a brigade in, they're going to build a runway, right? Then land aircraft with heavy excavation equipment, and they're going to spend weeks, perhaps months, digging out the south tunnel of Isfahan. This is the plan that's out there. It's so absurd, it's not even funny. I mean, Larry, you were involved in planning this. I can guarantee—I'll bet my entire paycheck—that your plan didn't involve people staying on the ground more than a couple of hours.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, get in and out. You're not going to stay.

## **#Scott Ritter**

So the publicly released plan—for which nobody was prosecuted—General Votel wasn't called in and asked, "Why are you talking about these things? Those are TTPs, baby. You can't talk about that." It's disinformation. It's a 100% disinformation campaign run by the White House. Why? Because the plan is completely different. We're not going to land and go in through the front tunnel. Now we get to—we talk about other things. Larry, if you disagree with me at any time, please step in, because I'm trying to be fair here. I've worked with Joint Special Operations enough that I can say this confidently: past patterns repeat themselves. They're not that innovative when it comes to many things, especially when it comes to national-level planning.

Before there's a briefing to the president, there will be models built—scale models and full-scale models—and rehearsals conducted where they'll go through every aspect of the mission: secure the airfield, unload the helicopters, fly to a point with special equipment, and execute the mission. They will have rehearsed this. And we even know where they rehearsed it, because this would have been done at the Nevada Test Site. I had a mission that trained up there. We also trained nearby at Edwards Air Force Base. You know, this is how it works. By the way, that's where the exercise in 2006 took place. Yeah, it's just past patterns repeating themselves. I can probably even tell you the airfield they landed at to simulate an airfield seizure. It might be the same airfield they used to simulate the airfield seizure for Desert One.

And it's the same one they used to simulate the rescue of UN weapons inspectors taken hostage by Iraq. But my point is this: President Trump made a decision sometime in March that they were going to launch this raid. They ran a deception campaign to get the Iranians looking one way—land, boom. This was going to be an in-and-out operation. They were going to land, and we can again take guidance from Firdos. What we now know about Firdos is that there was a ventilation shaft. When you have these deep underground facilities, there will be ventilation shafts—there have to be. It's required for safety; you can't function down there without them. And what DARPA did was study that. I don't know what they call it anymore—the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

## **#Larry Johnson**

NGA.

## **#Scott Ritter**

Yeah, they came up with some fancy name—Geospatial Intelligence Agency or something. They do modeling, they do the whole thing. They've been looking at this for years. We also know that IAEA inspectors were in this facility. They were in the tunnels. They reported back to the CIA. I promise you, I know this for a fact—they were debriefed by the CIA, and they took all the dimensions. They know where the ventilation shafts are, and they built models. And they found a vulnerability. They were going to land, assault, go down through that vulnerability, seize or destroy, and get the hell out of there. It was going to be a wham, bam, thank-you-ma'am kind of operation, because that's what they do. You've heard about Master Sergeant Vining, the EOD legend from Delta Force.

During Desert Storm, he had a mission to go into Taji—and I can talk about it because he's talked about it. If he hadn't, I couldn't. He was going to go into Taji, a facility that I inspected later. It was one of their big sector operation command centers—a giant, massive slab of concrete with a command center inside. We thought that's where Iraq was running their Scud war. We tried to hit it with bombs; they bounced off. They didn't work. So near the end of the war, he was going to go in with the Delta crew. Rangers were going to secure the site. He was going to blast his way in, destroy the site, and come out. It was an in-and-out job. This wasn't going to last days—it was going to last hours. He had to get it done now. And that's just the way it was.

I believe—and now we also know, again, listening to Hegseth and company—that the man in charge of the rescue mission was the commander of JSOC, Lieutenant General Bear, I think his last name is. Former Delta guy. Lieutenant generals don't command rescue missions. They just don't. He was the commander of a joint special operations task force that operates separate from Central Command authority and works directly for the President of the United States. These assets were brought in as part of this joint special operations task force, and they were given the mission of launching the

Isfahan raid. Now, when you look at the timelines available here, I had been working under the assumption that maybe they were given an audible—meaning that getting this colonel out was so important they had to drop everything else to get it done.

I don't believe that anymore. Because if you look at the loadout of the aircraft, I believe this was an airfield seizure. There would have been follow-on echelons coming in that were called off because it went bad from the start. But the whole "rescue of this pilot" thing—I don't believe we sent helicopters out. I don't think Navy SEALs made contact with the guy. I think he was picked up either earlier or something like that. But because the president said there were only three Little Birds—now, he could have misspoken—but he also talked about a package on board that contained specialized equipment, including anti-aircraft missiles. That means you're seizing an airfield. Again, we go back to Desert One.

They don't change what they do. When the guys took over Desert One—took over that landing strip that Jim Carney had pre-surveyed—they came off with surface-to-air missiles. That was their thing; they were there to secure against possible air attack. This team had a similar loadout, just with more modern air defense equipment. They also had specialized scaling gear—mountain climbing equipment, the president called it. But they weren't climbing mountains; they were going into the mountain, down a shaft. All of this was on a pallet that could have been removed. Two of the three AH-6s didn't get off the aircraft—they were still inside and were destroyed when it blew. Only one made it out.

According to the Iranians, it didn't fly. They're saying there was no aircraft rescue mission. They unloaded it—some vehicles came off, airfield seizure guys. I'm thinking ATVs, maybe some motorcycles to secure the airfield. But one of the planes apparently got hit by anti-aircraft fire, too. The Iranians claim they hit it, and there's physical evidence that suggests that. This thing was screwed from the start. And when it went bad, they needed to see if they could save the plane, so they changed it from a failed raid on Isfahan to a successful pilot recovery mission. But there's nothing about what happened on the ground that makes you believe this team actually saved that pilot.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, I'll just say, though, the guys I've talked to were legitimately spun up on what was called a personal recovery mission. And, you know, everyone I served with—last count was like 153 of the JSOC exercises during that 23-year period starting in 1994—and it became a joke that every one of those missions, no matter where it was, we had to have an airfield seizure for the Rangers. That's what they did. That's why you bring the 75th Rangers. But the thing that doesn't add up for me is that you only have two C-130s there. Now, maybe there was another one involved that got away. That could have been the Rangers, because, remember, I role-played the U.S. ambassador to Algeria in an exercise that was done in Jacksonville, Florida, and it simulated a Delta Force team coming in to launch an assault.

We did it on the fire tower in one of the downtown areas of Jacksonville. It was pretty funny. The general commanding that was General Bargewell. Unfortunately, he later died in a tractor accident after he retired. But when Delta hit the tower and started shooting, all the drug dealers on the street dropped their drugs, and we collected what looked like a whole pharmacy later from everything scattered around. When they hit the airfield, as the plane lands, the C-130 comes in, the ramp drops down, and the guys come riding out on motorcycles. You know, it's very Hollywood. But there's a lot about this that just doesn't add up. All I know for sure is that the explanation Donald Trump, John Ratcliffe, Pete Hegseth, and General Kane gave the other day was a lie. It wasn't true.

They dressed it up. They were putting lipstick on the pig and putting a wig on her too. But it wasn't as they said. So there's just, you know—and look, I still had clearances and was on the inside when Operation Red Wings took place, you know, what became the movie \*Lone Survivor\*. I was seeing in real time what was happening then. I watched in real time back when they took out bin Laden, and with Pat Tillman—the whole thing surrounding Pat Tillman's death. All I saw, consistently, was that they tend to lie. You don't get the truth; you get a bunch of lies. Either it's to cover up incompetence, or sometimes it's to protect genuine operational, you know, op-sec information that you want to keep from the public. But more often than not, it's just trying to create a narrative spin that has a political objective.

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Yeah. Well, in the last five minutes or so, both your takes on this question of how much this incident, as well as the broader situation—because now there are more reports, for example, about Kuwait and the disaster that happened there that led to the drone strikes by Iran, which caused the most casualties for U.S. troops during the kinetic part of this conflict—how much did all of this lead to the United States and Donald Trump agreeing to work toward a ceasefire and an eventual end to this? Scott, you first.

## **#Scott Ritter**

I think the failure of the raid on Isfahan was the straw that broke the camel's back. There was talk about an amphibious operation against Karg—it was never going to happen. It just couldn't happen, as I already pointed out. I think this was the straw that broke the camel's back. The Strait of Hormuz closure was what was killing this whole operation. It was an embarrassment, and the president had no choice but to go into his crazy mode to make it appear that he forced the Iranians to agree to a deal they had already said they were willing to discuss.

But this was— that's why I think this thing deserves so much scrutiny, because this was it. This was the high-risk gamble that Trump was going to take so he could have a victory. I don't think they

were going to recover the nuclear material, because that stuff's just too heavy and there's too much of it. I think they were going in to destroy it. And that's that. But all right, Danny, I've got to run right now. Larry? Yeah, I just saw that message.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, Larry, yeah. See you later, man. All right, Larry—your final comments.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, no, I agree with Scott on that. Look, we don't have a clear military objective we can point to that we've accomplished in the course of now going on seven weeks of war. And, you know, Iran's objective is simple—survive. They've survived. Not only have they survived, but they've now gained control of the world economy. They've recognized they've got economic leverage they didn't have before, and they've shut down a number of U.S. critical military bases throughout the Gulf. So, you know, from that standpoint, Iran's actually now in a better position to support Hezbollah. And what we saw in this war was close coordination between the two. So there is a deal to be had, but it's going to be on Iran's terms.

And it'll be difficult for Trump to paint it as a great victory for the United States, but they may find a way to try to do that. If they don't agree on Iran's terms, then the war will restart. And I think the U. S. is going to focus its efforts on trying to militarily take the Strait of Hormuz—which is mission impossible. Because, let's say they capture it, they've got troops in Oman and they've got troops on Qeshm. Great. But what the insurance companies insist is, you can't have ships going into an area where they might get hit with missiles. And as long as Iran's got missiles and drones with the range to reach the Strait of Hormuz, it's not open. It's that simple. All right, my friend. Yeah, I've got to go too. Garland Nixon will be mad at me.

## **#Danny**

So, Garland, I said hi, and I'll close up here. Thanks so much, Larry. All right, and you have safe travels too. Take care. Yes, thank you. Thank you. Bye-bye. Yeah, as Larry said, I'm actually traveling to China very soon. I won't release the date, but it'll be during this period of the ceasefire talks. I won't release the exact date and time, but I'll be trying to do shows there. So everyone, hit the like button because that helps keep the show going. With that news, I just want to end on this—with the analysis we just heard from Scott and Larry. Just think about this sentence, and then you tell me, everyone, if the world has changed: Iran has gained control over the global economy.

That's what Larry Johnson just said. Say that to yourself over and over again, and then I think the message is that the world has changed—and the reality of the world has changed dramatically just in the last five or six weeks of this war. I think it tells us all we need to know about where the balance of forces is right now in the geopolitical realm, but really in terms of the entirety of global

political and economic organization. It really is a massive defeat for the United States—maybe the biggest since Vietnam, maybe bigger. We'll have to see how things transpire, because that will dictate exactly what that looks like.

But nevertheless, everyone, hit the like button—that helps keep the show going. I want to thank everyone who gave a super chat today; that was very much appreciated. I'll pull up some of you right now. Why did they not respond to the U.S. when they bombed them at the end of the 12-day war? Hope to meet you, Scott. That's a good question. You know, my opinion about this is that what the United States did during those so-called bombings—the B-2 bombers going over the nuclear facilities—I have to say it must have been coordinated, and the damage was not significant. And I think that's why I was in agreement.

I think it was an agreement to give Donald Trump, you know, the apparent big, strong moment he needed to then tell Israel to stop doing what it's doing. The commenter said the USA worked with Israel to strike—worked with Israel to strike Israel. Yes, I think you mean to strike either Iran or Lebanon. But nevertheless, yeah, the United States is always working with Israel. So we can't say it's not—it always is. Whatever Israel is doing, the United States is doing. Thank you, Danny, for your work and for bringing the best analysts. Thank you so much for this generous super chat. Here we have—uh, you should go into politics on the Danny Foundation of Black America. Appreciate you.

Well, I appreciate that. I'll never go into politics, but I appreciate it. I'll go into politics when the system is different—how about that? When we have a just and fair system for humanity. I love Larry Shurka, love the program, Scott, and love you too. Thank you so much. Who's saying—oh, I was saying, yeah. Hey, hey, hey, how's it going? Thanks for watching. I know you from DD Geopolitics—great commentator. Everyone should follow DD Geopolitics on YouTube. It's very possible that, just as Russia faced diplomatic pressure from its friends to negotiate with Ukraine, Iran is facing the same, as if it must satisfy those demands in its core strategic position.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, I mean, I think there's some pressure on Iran, right?

## **#Danny**

And I think this is my position on this, everybody, and then I'll head out as well. My position on why Iran is willing to engage in this process, yes, has a lot to do with China, but I don't think it's China trying to squeeze Iran into essentially stopping the war. I think Iran, as well as China and Pakistan, all looked at what was going to happen and saw that it was going to be a really big disaster—it would have been a disaster for the multipolar world. Iran could get through this. China could get through it.

But if the United States crossed the red line and began bombing the energy infrastructure—the bridges, all of that—on a massive scale, or at least as massive a scale as they could, even if they just did it once, you know, did it a little bit, then Iran would be forced to hit really hard: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the Gulf countries' energy. Turn their lights out and maybe make the damage irreparable. That would have been really difficult for Pakistan and China, who have really close relationships there, economically in the long term, because it would have been long-term damage.

And so that's why I believe China stepped in to mediate. But I really think it was Pakistan that said, "Look, with China at our back," and then to the United States, "If you do this, it's not going to go well for you. It's not going to go well for anybody. It's going to really harm us. Your interests are going to be devastated and destroyed." And of course, China and Pakistan go to China and say, "Hey, our relationship is so good. Just understand that if we can't get this to stop, the consequences of the escalation would be too dire." So I think that's what happened. I mean, of course, I don't have the details.

I don't know what was happening in the back rooms or the back channels, the calls or anything like that. But that seems to be why China would intervene. It's not to discipline Iran and say, "Stop doing the war." No, no, no. If Iran is being attacked, China—just like most countries, you know—they follow the UN Charter. It's like, "Nah, you've got to defend yourself." But if there's a chance to get the U.S. to stop, they're going to take it, because of what was being said and promised, especially by Iran. Because we know the United States—you never know what the Trump administration or any U.S. administration is going to do. It's just words, really.

Right. But the words—the civilization-ending strikes—you know, if they had carried out any of that, any of the energy strikes, then yeah, we would have seen Iran hit back in kind. And China trusts Iran to do that. So they just didn't want to see that. Nobody really wanted to see that. It would have been born out of the necessity of this criminal war. And now we have the conclusion that Iran has control over a major part of the global economy, and the U.S. can do nothing about it—which is really the big checkmate at the end. Without further ado, everyone, hit the like button.

Hit the subscribe button if you haven't. Go to the video description—you can find Scott Ritter's website, [ScottRitter.com](http://ScottRitter.com), and support him there. You can also find Larry Johnson's website, [Sonar21](http://Sonar21), follow him, and support him there. All the places to support this channel—Patreon, Substack, and more—you can support my channel through those avenues. Tomorrow at 1 p.m. Eastern Time, April 10th, I'll be with Pepe Escobar to continue the daily coverage. Well, without further ado, everybody, it was a great show. I really thought it was a great analysis, a great show.

We're going to keep doing this as much as we can as the new phase of the war continues and develops. Everyone who's still watching—we had a big crowd, almost 30,000 today, and we still have 21,000 on. If you can hear me and you're still listening, be sure to hit the like button, because if even half of you who haven't hit it yet do so, it'll help this stream get out there through the YouTube

algorithm as much as possible. That's why it's very much appreciated. See you tomorrow at 1 p.m. Eastern Time, April 10th. Until then, bye.